

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 241350Z SEP 75

FM AMCONSUL ST JOHNS

TO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 1269

95TH STRATWG GOOSE BAY APRT NFLD

UNCLAS ST JOHNS 234

EO 11652 NA

TAGS PGOV MARR CA

SUBJ MUNICIPAL VEHICLE TAX

REF ST JOHNS 232 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY: CBC BROADCAST REPORTED LOCAL FEARS AND DISSATISFACTION IN HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY OVER ACTION OF TOWN COUNCIL IN ATTEMPTING LEVY TAX ON BASE PERSONNEL. REPORT FURTHER STATED THAT PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDED THAT HV-GB TOWN COUNCIL DROP CASE. CONOFF LEARNED FROM PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL THAT COURT CASE POSTPONED AND TOWN COUNCIL ARE TO BE INSTRUCTED TO DROP CASE ALTOGETHER.

1. CBC NEWS BROADCAST HERE THIS MORNING INCLUDED TAPED TELEPHONED REPORT FROM BARRY WHEATON, REPORTER AT HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY, ON MUNICIPAL VEHICLE TAX THAT TOWN ATTEMPTING IMPOSE ON USAF PERSONNEL. REPORT MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. SUMMONSES ISSUED TO AMERICANS AT HV-GB ARE CAUSING EMBARRASSMENT TO COMMUNITY. AMOUNT INVOLVED IS ABOUT 1000 DOLLARS SINCE THERE ARE ABOUT 200 PERSONS INVOLVED, EACH OF WHOM COULD BE TAXED FIVE DOLLARS. REPORT STATED TOWN COUNCIL HAS BEEN TOLD THAT BASE PERSONNEL EXEMPT UNDER NATO AGREEMENT BUT DID NOT SAY WHO TOLD THIS TO TOWN COUNCIL.

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B. TOWNSPEOPLE FEAR THAT TRYING TO ENFORCE TAXATION NOW MAY HAVE DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS ON FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS FOR THOSE BASE FACILITIES THEY COVET AND WHICH THEY HOPE TO ACQUIRE WHEN AMERICANS LEAVE NEXT YEAR. FACILITIES MENTIONED WERE THEATER, TWO SCHOOLS, AND FULLY-EQUIPPED BOWLING ALLEY.

C. ONE COUNCILOR HAS RESIGNED AND LABRADOR NORTH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HAS SENT STRONGLY-WORDED PROTEST ASKING THAT ISSUE BE DROPPED SINCE TOWN COUNCIL DOES NOT HAVE A CASE.

D. AN UNNAMED OFFICIAL OF DEPT OF PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS HAS RECOMMENDED ORALLY THAT HV-GB DROP THE CASE BUT TOWN COUNCIL WANTS WRITTEN CONFIRMATION WHICH IS EXPECTED ARRIVE THERE NEXT WEEK.

2. I PHONED DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEPT OF PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS ABOUT CASE AND WAS INFORMED HE UNFAMILIAR WITH IT. HE ADVISED QUERYING DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEPT OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS, MR. C.W. KEEPING.

3. KEEPING CHUCKLED WHEN HE GOT MY CALL AND SAID HE HAD BEEN EXPECTING IT. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH HV-GB AUTHORITIES AND HAD INSTRUCTED THEM POSTPONE COURT PROCEEDINGS UNTIL MIDDLE OF OCTOBER. BEFORE THEN, HOWEVER, HE PLANS ISSUE INSTRUCTIONS TO HV-GB TOWN COUNCIL THAT THEY ARE NOT RPT NOT TO PROCEED WITH THEIR ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE MUNICIPAL VEHICLE TAXES ON BASE PERSONNEL AND THAT JUDICIAL ACTION SHOULD BE QUASHED. HE FURTHER STATED THAT HIS INVOLVEMENT IN CASE AND INVOLVEMENT OF HIS DEPT IS AT THIS STAGE FOR USC'S INFO ONLY AND SHOULD NOT BE REVEALED.

4. UNLESS CASE SOMEHOW GETS OFF THE RAILS, THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE AN END TO THE PROBLEM. NO FURTHER ACTION ON EMBASSY OTTAWA'S SIDE SEEMS NECESSARY.

5. FOR 95TH STRAT WG: SUGGEST YOU ATTEMPT IMMEDIATELY TO CONFIRM THAT COURT CASE TO BE PUT OVER TO MID-OCTOBER AND THAT ANY COURT APPEARANCE TOMORROW WILL BE FOR NO MORE UNCLASSIFIED

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THAN TO ANNOUNCE THAT FACT. IN EVENT YOU UNABLE CONFIRM THIS, LET THIS OFFICE KNOW WITHOUT DELAY. IF POSSIBLE, YOU SHOULD AVOID REVEALING SOURCE OF OUR INFO (PARA 3 ABOVE).
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